

Rethinking the Global Development Architecture

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Panel 1: Addressing the impact of the global financial and economic crisis on development, including issues related to the international financial and monetary architecture and global governance structures

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Thank you for this opportunity. I am here representing DAWN – Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era – a network of women activists and scholars from across the global South.

At the end of the Doha Review Conference, women welcomed the improved language in its outcome document, found in Paragraphs 4 and 19, that when taken together, probably represent the most wide-ranging commitments to gender equality made by governments in any recent economic policy-oriented forum, which typically ignores this dimension of development. This breakthrough, however, is limited by the weak commitments in just about every dimension of financing for development.

Women’s organizations and feminists, have long engaged with the UN as the most representative, transparent and open of available inter-governmental spaces. Especially during the 1990s, the UN conferences opened up spaces for civil society engagement on a range of issues – the environment, human rights, population, women, social development, habitat, racism, and more. The UN has been the terrain where women’s human rights and gender equality have become an important part of global commitments.

However, it was in the heyday of the Washington Consensus that the UN Conferences of the 1990s, with their themes addressing critical global public goods and social inequalities, occurred. As a result, the commitments under the UN Conferences often conflicted with the fiscal belt-tightening and privatization of the reigning neoliberal orthodoxy; their mandates remained underfunded; and, they tended to fall into institutional vacuums or parallel structures. As a result, the commitments were often at odds with or had limited connection to the financing programmes pursued by the main global economic institutions that were also setting the core development agenda. Since, the UN itself, was being weakened institutionally in terms of its capacity to address this agenda, gender equality faced a double whammy.

The current financial crisis presents an opportunity to make significant structural changes in the global development architecture. I think we can all agree that the old structures and approaches cannot continue. We clearly need new institutional arrangements that genuinely promote the rights-based development of both countries and peoples in the global South. We have four proposals to move us in this direction:

First, the UN must regain a pivotal role in this new global development architecture. We need to recognize that the UN system has been weakened along with national state machineries. In the current division of labor, the Paris Club and the World Bank deals with external debt and debt sustainability. The OECD DAC's Paris Declaration is the preferred framework for official development assistance. Resolving issues around international trade policies are left to the World Trade Organization. Hence, the Bretton Woods Institutions and the WTO take the lead in defining macroeconomic policies while the UN is left to deal with (a) humanitarian and peace-keeping efforts; (b) establishing normative frameworks, such as human rights; and (c) setting development targets, such as the MDGs, all of which are disconnected from macroeconomic policy frameworks. As a result many development issues get sidelined by multilateral institutions that are focused on growth rather than the reduction of inequalities. Unfortunately, the commitments made during the G20 summit in London to increase resources of the Bank and the Fund will only reinforce the sidelining of the United Nations system in the global development architecture.

Second, it is critical that the new global development architecture fully integrates gender equality in its agenda. Women's empowerment, women's human rights and gender equality must be given prominence by an agency that has the capacity to determine the UN's front and center development framework and not be marginalized to the sidelines. Thus, deliberations on the UN System-wide Coherence will be an indicator of commitments, or lack thereof, to secure the UN's pivotal role.

Third, we need to not only strengthen the UN's gender equality machinery but also enhance the capacity of national gender machineries to participate and influence the financial, monetary and fiscal policy processes at the country level. Capacity is critical to create coherence between macroeconomic policy and gender equality goals. By coherence we mean a different kind of division of labor, where public policies change the incentive structures in society so that the responsibilities for provisioning and for the performance of care are shared among state institutions, market institutions, and the institutions of the households and communities.

Finally, the UN will succeed in reclaiming its central role in the development architecture only IF women's and other social movements, are fully involved in this process. The multi-stakeholder approach of the FFD process remains an important mechanism for an exchange of analysis and political views and needs to be an integral part of any discussions on reform. The

multi-stakeholder process can be strengthened with shadow reporting mechanism that women's organizations have benefitted as they engage with CEDAW. Under this type of mechanism, women's movements can easily demonstrate their capacity to analyze the development challenges from a feminist perspective, to mobilize our constituencies, and to push the envelope for development alternatives.

In closing, the big picture is not just economic governance but a broader notion of development governance. We believe this is THE political moment to move away from failed institutions and policies toward a rights-based global development architecture that recognizes the central role of care, social reproduction and sexuality. We are ready to engage with you in this political challenge.